

ILLINOIS HISTORIC SITES SURVEY INVENTORY

CK-H-60

1. Name of Site:

Common Cahners Publishing Co.Historic Kimball House

2. Location:

Street and Number

1801 S. Prairie Ave.

City or Town

Chicago

County

Cook

TownshipRangeSection1/2 SectionZip Code3. Classification:

Category (check one)

District Building
 Site Structure

Integrity (check one)

Altered Unaltered
 Moved Original
Site

4. Ownership:

Private
 Public

Status (check one)

Occupied
 Unoccupied
 Preservation work in progress

Access to Public

Yes Restricted Unrestricted No

Present Use (check one or more)

Agricultural Industrial Religious
 Commercial Military Scientific
 Educational Museum Transportation
 Entertainment Park Other
 Government Private Residence

5. Ownership of Property:Owner's Name

Cahners Publ. Co.

Phone NumberStreet and NumberCity or TownStateCountyZip Code6. Description: Chateanesque

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated
 Ruins Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation underway?

Yes No

ARCHITECTURE

7. Historical Themes: (check one or more of the following)

- Archeological Site (Pre-Columbian)
- Archeological Site (Post-Columbian to 1673)
- French Influence (1673-1780)
- Illinois Frontier (1780-1818)
- Illinois Early (1818-1850)
- Illinois Middle (1850-1900)
- Illinois Late (1900-present)
- Famous People (give names & dates)

8. Specific Date: 1890-92

Areas of significance (check one or more of the following)

- Aboriginal (historic)
- Aboriginal (pre-historic)
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communication
- Conservation
- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Landscape Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music
- Political
- Religion/Philosophy
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Humanitarian
- Theater
- Transportation
- Urban Planning
- Other (specify)

Brief statement of significance: (include all names and dates) Residence designed by Kimball, the piano mfs. by Solon S. Beman. Nat'l Register - included in the Prairie Ave. Historical District

9. Form prepared by:

Name and Title: _____ Date: 6/23/75

Organization: _____ Phone: _____

Street and Number: _____

City or Town: _____ County: _____ Zip Code: _____

During the course of the Survey we often find it necessary to search for a particular site. When filling out the Survey form, please list according to the following example, published references to the site for which forms are being completed. If a bibliography can be compiled, it will greatly deduct from the Survey's task.

Bibliography

Robertson, Robert, Of Whales and Men. New York, Alfred K. Knopf, Inc., 1954.
National Register material



Primary Use

Archaeology

Architecture

History

1. Name of Site:
Cahners:
 Cahners Publishing Company, Inc.

Historic:
 William W. Kimball House

2. Location of site:
Street and Number: Pariship: Section:
 1801 South Prairie Avenue
City or Town: Zip Code: Range: W Section:
 Chicago 60616

County:
 Cook

3. Classification:
Category: (check one) Integrity: (check one)
 District Building Altered Inter. Unaltered Ext.
 Site Structure

Position: (check one)
 Moved Original

Ownership: Status:
 Public Occupied Preservation
 Private Unoccupied Work in progress

Access to the public:
 Yes Restricted Unrestricted No

Present Use: (check one or more)
 Agricultural Industrial Religious
 Commercial Military Scientific
 Educational Museum Transportation
 Entertainment Park Other specify
 Government Private residence

4. Owner of property: Owner's name: Phone number:
 Cahners Publishing Company, Inc.

Street and number:
 1801 South Prairie Avenue
City or town:
 Chicago
State: County: Section:
 Illinois Cook 60616

6. Description:

Condition:

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation under way? Yes No

If yes, give a brief description on the back of this page.

7. Historical themes: (check one or more of the following)

- Archaeological site (pre-Columbian)
 Archaeological site (post-Columbian to 1673)
 French influence (1673-1780)
 Illinois frontier (1780-1818)
 Illinois early (1818-1850)
 Illinois middle (1850-1900)
 Illinois late (1900-present)
 Famous people (give names and dates)

1. Specific date of site: 1890-1892

Areas of significance: (check one or more)

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (Pre-historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Artistic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify: Chicago History) |

Brief statement of significance: (Include all names and dates.)

Use back of page and additional sheets if necessary.

8. Form prepared by

Name and Title: Mrs. Susan Benjamin Date: 12-11-70

Organization: Comm. on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks

Street and Number: 320 North Clark Street

City or Town: Chicago County: Cook Zip Code: 60610

Phone Number:

During the course of the Survey we often find it necessary to search for references for a particular site.

When filling out the survey form, please list according to the following examples any published references to the site for which the form is being completed.

If a bibliography can be compiled, it will greatly reduce the survey's task.

Bibliography Form

ROBERTSON, Robert S., Of Whales and Men, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1974.

Description:

The three-story Kimball House has a majestic exterior of Bedford limestone, sheathing a wood frame. Footings are of limestone, supporting a basement and three stories. Topping the building is a steep slate roof crowned with an ornamental iron-railed gallery.

Throughout the years, the "Chateausque" facades have not been altered. As is characteristic of the 16th Century "Francis I" style, today often referred to as "Chateausque", the house is topped by a complex mass of steeply sloping roof shapes--hipped, gabled, conical--punctuated with dormer windows; balustrades; tall, slender chimneys with molded designs, and a myriad of finials. Windows on every story and on all four facades are of various shapes and sizes: curved and flat, arched and rectangular, large and small. In every window, stone mullions and transoms separate the panes of glass.

Although the general shape of the house is rectangular, its massing, like the roofline, is irregular, made up of numerous projections. Windowed walls extend beyond the plans of the building as do other smaller architectural elements; string courses, brackets, balustrades, and pilasters with heavily ornamented Composite capitals.

The main facade, on Prairie Avenue, is dominated by a broad, elliptical bow window, reaching from the ground to the roofline. Centered above the cornice that tops the bow window is a large divided window flanked by ornamented pilasters and capped by a steep gable lavishly decorated in foliate bas-relief ornament and flanked by finials. The curved sides of the bow window are topped, above the cornice, by a filigreed balustrade that forms a sort of balcony in front of the windows in the sides of the dormer projection.

It is said that the interior once contained 29 rooms. Today, although many rooms have been subdivided, the building's character has not been altered appreciably. The main rooms--entrance hall, parlors, and dining room--are still richly paneled in oak and mahogany. Ceilings are beamed. The original onyx fireplace remain. The intricately carved balustrades of the main staircase are in place. Throughout the interior, as well as the exterior of the mansion, the dignity that once prevailed on Prairie Avenue remains intact.

Significance:

In his Old Chicago Houses, published in 1941, John Drury cited the Kimball House as Chicago's finest example of the French Chateau style of architecture. Indeed, its significance as typifying this style is recognized nationally today. Marcus Whiffen, architectural historian and author of American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles, includes a photograph of the Kimball House among the illustrations he gives of the "Chateausque" style.

The "Chateausque" style, according to Whiffen, is characterized by masonry construction, asymmetrical plans, and silhouettes with high steep-sided hipped roofs rising to a ridge or a flat top. These roofs are surmounted by metal railings or openwork metal cresting. Dormer windows with pinnacled gables are universal to the style. In the Kimball House, these characteristics are epitomized.

Solon S. Beman, architect of the Kimball House, was brought to Chicago from New York in 1879 by George Pullman. Chiefly noted for designing the village of Pullman, said to be America's first planned industrial town, Beman is also known for having designed Chicago's Studebaker (now Fine Arts) Building and Grand Central Station, in addition to the Kimball House.

Significance, cont.

William W. Kimball, who commissioned Beman to design his house, was the founder of a piano and organ manufacturing company that was to become one of the city's leading firms. According to Chicago and its Makers, Kimball was one of the city's best-loved citizens. He was also one of its wealthiest and is said to have spent a million dollars on his mansion.

Built on Prairie Avenue, which an Old Chicago saying quoted by Arthur Meeker in his novel Prairie Avenue described as "the sunny street that holds the sifted few," the Kimball home stood near those of Marshall Field, Philip Armour, Pullman, and John J. Glessner. With the Glessner House, designed by H. H. Richardson in 1886 and designated an official "Chicago Landmark" in 1970, the Kimball House is practically the last remaining evidence of Prairie Avenue's high point as Chicago's foremost residential street during the 1880's and 1890's.

With the exception of the Glessner House, the mansions on Prairie Avenue followed the vogue of the day and were built in styles derived from architecture of the past. The Kimball House was no exception. Patterned by Beman after the Chateau de Jeselmin, in the French province of Brittany, it is significant today because it portrays a way of life long since gone from the Chicago--and American--scene.

The house is further distinctive because it stands in the immediate vicinity of an event important in Chicago history--the Fort Dearborn Massacre. It was near what is today 18th Street and Prairie Avenue that those men, women, and children fleeing the Fort during the War of 1812 were slaughtered. A statue which formerly marked the spot is now housed in the Chicago Historical Society, while a plaque commemorating the tragedy is affixed to the building at the northeast corner of the intersection, across from the Kimball House.

Bibliographical References:

Bach, Ira. Chicago on Foot. Fellet Publishing Company, 1969, p. 130.

Drury, Jehn. Old Chicago Houses. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. pp. 49-53.

Gilbert, Paul, and Bryson, Charles Lee. Chicago and its Makers. Chicago: Felix Mendelssohn, Publisher, 1929. pp. 180, 653.

Meeker, Arthur. Prairie Avenue. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969. pp. 141-2, 145.